

JACK SMITH
**Stowaway
to the Stars**

A new spacecraft called Voyager, we are told, is on its way to the stars with a two-hour phonograph of earth sounds and a video machine with 115 photographs.

Someday, if there are any sentient beings out there in the galaxy beyond our solar system, they may play the record and look at the pictures and decide whether they want us for pen pals or not.

The story in the paper said only that the pictures would include the Taj Mahal, a nursing mother, and Monument Valley, and that the record would include Melanesian pan-pipes and Louis Armstrong's "Melancholy Blues."

I don't know who chose the music and photographs, but I suppose each of us would have his own ideas about what he would like to see and hear if he happened to live on some distant planet, never having heard of the earth, and received such a package out of the blue.

I suppose the record begins with something like, "Hello there—whoever you are—this is earth," the idea being not to scare them, if they happen to be shy; to win their confidence before overwhelming them with data they may be quite unable to comprehend.

I don't believe I'd start out that way. First, I think, we ought to get their attention. I'd sock 'em right off with "The Stars and Stripes Forever," and then say, "Hello, there—whoever you are—how did you like that?"

Is Voyager taking nothing but a chamber of commerce promotion kit out there? Or are we going to tell it like it is? If so, the picture ought to include not only the finals of the Miss America Beauty pageant and Avalon Bay full of white boats on a summer day, to show our culture at its best, but also the inbound Santa Ana Freeway at 8 o'clock on a rainy Friday morning, and a Ram quarterback being sacked by San Francisco.

I have an idea that photographs of our folkways, such as beauty pageants and football games, will fascinate and mystify our new friends out there far more than mathematical equations, chemical formulas and diagrams of the internal combustion engine. Being perhaps billions of years ahead of us, in evolution, experience and invention, they should have little trouble grasping the implications of Einstein's E=mc², or a photograph, let's say, of the mushroom cloud over Eniwetok.

But I wonder if they would understand pictures of our freakout in the mud at Woodstock, a marathon dance of the 1930s, the charge of the light brigade at Balalava, or Evel Knievel sailing his motorcycle over a row of 39 automobiles.

As for music, we are probably sending them some up-beat Bach and Beethoven's Ninth, so I am glad to see that, for balance, we are sending them some of Louis Armstrong's blues. They ought to be advised out there, wherever they are, that we're occasionally melancholy here, as well as quite mad.

I doubt if a picture of a nursing mother will tell them everything they might want to know about love and marriage and our method of reproducing. Just to give them a hint, I'd send them a few tunes like "Tea for Two," "Dancing Cheek to Cheek," "Baby, It's Cold Outside," "Some Enchanted Evening," and "Always."

We ought to show them our frivolous side, too. We would be madder than we are if we didn't have the gift of laughter, and perhaps it would help our friendship along at the outset if those people out there could hear some of it, as well as the sound of our marvelous bombs.

Years ago, when he had the Connecticut Yankees, Rudy Vallee made a record in which, while doing the vocal, he blew a word, tried to correct it and made it worse, started to laugh, tried to check his laughter and go on singing, and finally, inexorably, sank into gibbering hysteria, in which the other Yankees helplessly joined him, carrying on valiantly as their ship went down. I've forgotten the name of the song, but the record certainly ought to be sent into space to give the star people some hint of the fate that awaits us here on their distant neighbor planet.

Despite predictions that the world will end either with a bang or a whimper, I have an idea that sooner or later the whole scheme of things, the meaning of life, will be revealed to us in a flash, perhaps during a New York City blackout, and we'll all die laughing.

The wonderful thing about the whole mission, it seems to me, is that we're undertaking it at all, when we're told that there's no chance of the package reaching any other eyes and ears for at least 40,000 years, if ever. That implies a kind of far-reaching human faith, a vision and a goodwill that go far beyond one's own being. In a smaller time frame, we see it in the planting of trees by old men who will never live to see their fruit.

And if it takes Voyager 40,000 years to find an audience, we must expect that it will take another 40,000 to get an answer, unless it comes by a faster messenger than ours.

Nobody can say what that message will be, 80,000 years from now; but I'm willing to bet everything I own in this world that when they open that envelope, this is what it will say:

"Send us more Satchmo. We dig."

THE VIEWS INSIDE

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ILLUSTRATOR'S EYE—Author-illustrator Ezra Jack Keats examines portfolio at conference.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS—Illustrator Diane Goode, left, author-illustrator Jackie Sage

take a break at sixth Writers' Conference in Children's Literature held in Santa Monica. Times photos by Harry Chase

CAPPING BESSIE'S FLOW . . . AND OTHER TALES

Writers for Children Compare Notes

BY BETTY LIDDICK
Times Staff Writer

Once upon a time, at the edge of a big ocean, some grown-ups had a meeting. They called the meeting a conference, which means it lasted a couple of days and they talked about important things.

The grown-ups met in Santa Monica at the Miramar. It is a pale pink hotel the color of bubble gum that has been chewed too much. Inside, beyond a patio where a fat fig tree grew, they talked about witches and spiders, a cow named Bessie and the best time to get an agent.

The men and women were writers. They write books for children. Some are awful books about birds that say, "cheep, cheep." Others are marvelous books, the kind that stay in your soul and make you feel good and happy and full of wonder whenever you think of them, sometimes all of your life.

In one of the closing sessions last week of the sixth annual Writers' Conference in Children's Literature, a group of authors pulled their chairs into a circle for a reading and critique of manuscripts.

Lin Oliver, executive director of the Society of Children's Book Writers—a national organization of 1,000 members that sponsored the event—read aloud:

"This tale begins one morning on a lovely country farm . . ."

The story continued in verse about Bessie, a cow that suddenly started giving a limitless supply of milk. The police tried to help, the CIA, the President. In the end, some Texas oil workers capped Bessie's flow.

The authors applauded. It was a delightful story, deftly done, they agreed. But there were some flaws.

First, a young man pointed out, the story had words such as "strife" and "chaos" that young children might not understand. Then, a woman said, there was the unsightly imagery of Bessie being capped. Frightening for children perhaps? Could the problem be handled more personally, say, by the local plumber?

Finally, a literal-minded critic spoke up:

"How could this cow give a quantity of milk bigger than her body?"

Over the Moon

A reply came from another author: "Well, the cow jumped over the moon, didn't she?"

Of course. Everyone laughed. Don Brody leaned back in his chair, smiling. He had written the story about Bessie. "Thank you all very much," he said. "This has been very helpful."

He picked up a thick briefcase to leave. Brody, 43, counsel general in California for the African nation of Malawi, has been writing children's stories for years. "I started doing it for my own kids," he said out in the hall. "I have hundreds of stories—hundreds."

He opened his briefcase and flipped through file folders. His youngest child, 4, had come to him the other night in terror, he said. "She had an eye infection and her eye had sealed shut. I held her in my arms and said this out loud and my eldest son turned on the tape recorder."

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Times Rejects Porno Film Ads

BY OTIS CHANDLER
Publisher of The Times

The Los Angeles Times no longer will accept advertising for hard-core pornographic movies.

Given our long and deep commitment to free expression, the decision to drop this advertising was reached reluctantly and after long and careful deliberation.

The truth is, we have been dealing with an indefensible product, one with absolutely no redeeming values, and this phenomenon shows no sign of leaving the contemporary social scene.

Cutting through the arguments on all sides, we think it is entirely out of character for The Times, with its long history of vigorous citizenship in this community, to continue to play a role

in the promotion of commercialized pornography.

Thus, effective today, we have banned advertising that appeared formerly under the "Adult Movie" heading.

At the same time, The Times will begin publication today of a Family Film Guide that will explicitly assess the content of individual movies suitable for family viewing.

The new Family Film Guide, which appears today on Page 7, is aimed at providing more assistance in film selection than is available in the industry's rating system.

Movies will be categorized as Family, Mature and Adult, and the reasons for their placement in these categories will be briefly stated.

Groucho — Always Leave 'Em Laughing

The author directed Groucho Marx's TV series, *You Bet Your Life*, on American radio and TV and British television. He also directed Marx in "Time for Elizabeth," a play written by Marx and Norman Krasna that ran three years in summer stock.

BY ROBERT DWAN

I remember two things Groucho said to me frequently. "Bob," he would say, "I have nothing but confidence in you." Slight pause. "And very little of that." The other remark occurred, predictably, to conclude a discussion of a routine or a piece of business for our show.

I would say, "But Groucho, it doesn't make sense." And he would say, "What do you care as long as they're laughing?"

I once divided him into two—Julius and Groucho—but I abandoned the idea, not because a case couldn't be made,



GROUCHO MARX
... as he was in 1964.

Times photo

but because it didn't matter. The irrepressible, sometimes abrasive Groucho was a character created to be used as a weapon against stupidity by the gentle, intellectual Julius. I loved him both.

We entered the dining room of the Arizona Biltmore a few years ago. The room was large, high-ceilinged, thick-carpeted, formal. The waitresses were in black uniforms with white caps and aprons. The pooled income of the guests could have bought at least one Polaris submarine. We were stopped near the door by a man who owned a string of winning horses and several counties in California.

"Harpo!" he boomed. "I want you to meet my friend, Phoebe. My dear, this is Harpo."

I said later, "It's nice to be recognized wherever you go, Harpo."

"I didn't want to embarrass him," said Julius Marx. The maitre d'hotel awaited us across the long room, with

For another view of Groucho, see Cecil Smith's column on Page 11.

Mary Petty waitresses fluttering in the background. "Shall we dance?" asked Groucho. And we did, gracefully, taking turns leading, ending at the table with deep, formal bows. We got a laugh.

At the table, our waitress, more Helen Hokinson than Mary Petty, was not young, but she was pleasant.

"Did anyone ever tell you that you look like Greer Gar-

son?"—that was Julius speaking. "Oh, come now." She did not really believe him, but she knew he was not making fun of her. He had another admirer.

A 9-year-old boy appeared, planted himself firmly against Groucho's shoulder and launched into a semicoherent discussion of our TV show. "That kid will go far," I said. "I wish he'd get started," Groucho said.

The boy placed a menu between the soup and a spoon. "Autograph," he demanded. A beaming mother appeared with a silver pen. "Freddy watches your show every

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'Alcoholism Is a Family Disease'

BY LORRAINE BENNETT
Times Staff Writer

ORANGE — The engineer had been sober for five weeks after 20 years of alcoholism. His family, accustomed to coping with his alcoholic behavior, was having trouble adjusting to this stranger in the house.

His wife didn't want him y-cuing at the kids. She didn't want him seeking an intimate relationship too soon, either. Yet she wanted to be romanced, taken out to a movie occasionally, to be part of his new life. But so far, she complained, their relationship was "a blank."

Living in their house was like walking on eggshells. He didn't know yet how he stood in her eyes, or where he stood within the family. Was he part of the household or wasn't he? Couldn't he do anything to please her?

Suddenly she blurted: "I can't get mad at you for alcoholism now, so I have to find something else."

"What did you say?" asked the counselor, leaning forward, not sure the woman had heard her own words. "Repeat what you just said."

"I said since I can't get mad at him for being alcoholic, I have to find something else."

The group of about 18, comprising five families, moved closer, sensing something important was happening.

"Stand up," the counselor ordered. She placed the man and his wife several feet apart, then called about eight members of the group, including the couple's two children, to form two lines facing each other.

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73RD BIRTHDAY OBSERVED

The Count Returns to Disneyland

BY LEONARD FEATHER
Times Staff Writer

Count Basie found a somewhat more suitable opening device this year than last with which to kick off his annual week at Disneyland. In 1976, after his first night in the park, he suffered a heart attack. Sunday night, returning to Anaheim, he celebrated his 73rd birthday.

Since returning to the helm of his orchestra last January, Basie has slowed down a little. Looking trim and well, sharp in a salmon-colored suit and waistcoat, he puffed on a cigar (the doctor has him down to two a day) and tried to relax between sets but failed to escape the autograph hunters and the fans posing for pictures with him.

Nat Pierce, who last year filled in at the piano during Basie's four-month absence, was on hand. The holder of the world's record for sideman longevity, guitarist Freddie Green, was at Basie's side as he has been since March, 1937. There was a sense that everyone here was grateful to the Count for existing and for bringing back a brand of honest, swinging music that defies the march of time.

"I've been taking care," Basie said. "The band works six nights most weeks, but we've had some vacation." Last week he was back at his home in Freeport, in the Baha-

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